

The American Presbyterian.

John A. Weir 16 July 68

New Series, Vol. V, No. 22.

Genesee Evangelist, No. 1149.

\$3 00 By Mail. \$3 50 By Carrier.
50cts Additional after three Months.

PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1868.

Ministers \$2.50 H. Miss. \$2.00.
Address:—1334 Chestnut Street.

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THE BIBLE AS A TEXT BOOK.

Considering its high claims as the only inspired book and as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, as the only authority upon the most important questions of man's nature, destiny and relations to God, the Bible is very little studied by Christian people. It is read and revered almost universally, but in comparison with the amount of study going on, it is studied almost none at all. A good deal is said of Sunday schools in this respect, and they are unquestionably important; but what is half an hour a week upon the Bible, under instructors who must snatch time for preparation from the spare moments of a busy life, in comparison with five, six, eight, and more hours a day for five days of the week, of the severest mental application, under teachers whose work is their profession and their living? Where among real studies is the Bible? Only in professional theological schools. The Bible is studied, as Blackstone in law, or Wood in medicine. The training schools of the people know almost nothing of it.

We have become so accustomed to this omission that we think very little of it; yet it seems to us a very great mistake. Mohammedans and heathens with their Bibles for their only text books, each do better. And should the instruction of our youth be strictly confined to the Bible, with all that would be lost by excluding some of the modern and purely scientific elements of culture, what a mighty instrument of education, in the best sense of the word, would remain! It is nothing less than God's own method for the moral and spiritual training of the race. The study of its original languages would give play for the philological element, to which the highest place in pedagogic apparatus has so long been conceded. Instruction in many branches would necessarily be conveyed in elucidating the text in ancient manners, and customs illustrated by modern travel and discovery; ancient history and geography, ethnography, zoology and botany; in studying the first chapters of Genesis, attention would be called to the entire circle of natural science in its most modern aspects. And aside from matters incidental to the explanation of the text, the text itself contains the only authentic primitive history of mankind and deserves to have the precedence in all historical treatises and pursuits; moreover, it gives us the history of the world from the only true point of view—that of Redemption. It gives the key to the understanding of all history in the Person and work of Christ, thus informing the student of the most important facts, and training his judgment to proper views of the essence of all history. Viewed as literature, not only is the English translation of the Scriptures a model of pure Anglo-Saxon style—the frequent perusal of which, Coleridge held, would preserve a writer from vulgarity—but the illustrations of the highest forms of rhetoric are so numerous and so admirable in the Bible, that we know not how any one's education in this branch could be considered in any material point defective, who had been trained in literary matters exclusively under its influence. Nowhere in literature are like examples to be found of that effectiveness of style which consists in honorably and self-designingly subjecting it to the purpose of conveying the writer's ideas intelligibly and forcibly to the simplest mind, and yet nowhere are there loftier flights of imagination, grander descriptions of nature, more vivid and overwhelming appeals to the unsophisticated passions of men. Nowhere such a treasure of proverbs, similitudes and parables. How should it be otherwise, when the authors' lips were touched with coals from the heavenly altar, and their minds and hearts bathed with the effulgence of an inspiration richer than earthly genius? and when among them was He who spake as never man spake?

And if this Biblical school retained its pupils to riper years, their expanding minds would only begin to be ready to appreciate the profounder aspects of their great text book—the higher problems of criticism, following the internal structure and authorship of the various books, the mutual relations of the members of a series of writings extending over two thousand years, that extraordinary progress amid unity of the revelation; the establishment of the sublime claims of the book against every sort of opposition; the divine truth and universality of the Christian religion amid the conflicting narrow creeds and inventions of men; the moral ruin of man and his Redemption by Jesus Christ—to whatever length in the study of Theology, the student might have time or inclination to go; these are problems worthy of his loftiest powers

and fitted in the highest measure to expand and train them. We know not why an education properly conducted on such a basis might not, with far greater propriety, be called complete, than one which has run the rounds of the entire curriculum of classical, heathenism, and profane naturalism and secular science, which now figure in our College Catalogues, and in which the standards of the religion of Christendom are unknown, or have but a passing recognition. It is clear that in such a training, all the foundation elements of a sterling character would be inculcated; and a generation would be brought forward more likely to acquit themselves gloriously and honorably in the various business, social, domestic and political relations of life than are those now forming under the other method. So our sons should be as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.

Of course, we are not, in indulging this suggestion, to be understood as asking for the overthrow of our present system of education, and for the substitution of the Bible in place of it all. But just now when the movement for reconstructing our system is in progress, and when individuals are trying to get a control of our educational apparatus, which they have never had, through natural science, the friends of a truly right and wholesome education should put in a claim for the recognition of the Bible as a distinct branch of study, worthy of a place parallel with any of the new studies which are now being grouped into distinct schools around the old College, worthy to run through the entire College course, worthy of its separate Professor and Lecturer, and of its distinct set of prizes, honors and titles. It is a pity we cannot have enough agreement among the denominations to secure not only the reading, but the study of the Bible in our Common Schools. We have heard of a High School Principal in this city with a "M" in his name, who counted himself excluded from the school readings of the Bible, to preserve, as he says, the "American youth's soundly indoctrinated in the heavy wisdom of these precepts, if in no other part of the Bible. But, as we must, doubtless, for the present, be content with what we have in the Common Schools, why not attract attention to our higher Institutions? Why should not some of our wealthy men, whose munificent donations to colleges in this country is one of the best signs of the times, give their next twenty, or fifty, or one hundred thousand dollars towards a professorship or school of the sacred books of Christendom? If the study be not made obligatory to a College degree, as it should be, then let every proper means be employed to lead our youth to apply themselves to this branch and to create and diffuse such a sentiment in the community that it shall be considered a necessary part of every finished man's training to have a fair acquaintance with the sources of the religion of the civilized world and of the great questions growing out of them. The trifling attempts which are now being made in this direction, are scarcely to be named in view of the new developments of scientific unbelief breaking forth on every hand.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

HARRISBURG, May 21, 1868.

The members of the General Assembly are rallying in force. Some 240 had replied to the letters of the Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements and had places assigned them, yesterday. The efforts of Mr. Robinson to arrange for the accommodation of the members, have been indefatigable and eminently successful. With a membership in his church of but 200, he has undertaken, and has accomplished the work of providing for nearly 300 guests, and we think it is already felt that no Assembly has been more agreeably entertained than this.

There is cordiality mingled with a seriousness in the greetings of members, who seem to feel that no common matters are to engage their deliberations and command their judgments. And men known to be every way competent, from rich and long experience in the Church, from breadth of views, and high ability, to reach a correct decision, are here in such numbers as to make it seem a providentially selected body for the great business to come before it. We have already named some of these men—Drs. Skinner, Prentiss, Spear, Stearns, Fisher, H. B. Smith, John C. Smith, Hickok, Nelson, Patterson, Swazey, Morris, Duffield, Noble, and such elders as Hons. W. E. Dodge, E. A. Lambert, Stewart, Miller, with many others giving such tone to the body as, even if we had not long ago learned to confide in the wisdom of our Assemblies, would assure us of the safety of the interests that come into the hands of this one of 1868.

Among the aged men of the body, we notice Dr. Skinner and Father Rankin, both far towards eighty, yet active and vigorous. Dr. Cox is among the outside members, and Dr. Duffield Sr. is expected to-morrow. We also notice that every Theological Seminary in our bodies represented in the person of its professor of Theology, as Prof. H. B. Smith, of Union, Prof. H. A. Nelson of Lane, and Prof. Hall of Auburn. Dr. Skinner makes a second appearance from Union, and Prof. Morris from Assa's Hill. Every Seminary in the other branch also is represented as Albany we believe by the Professors of Theology.

There are among the full two hundred delegates in attendance, in the opening of many quite new faces; many from missionary and remote Presbyteries; a full delegation of able, staunch men comes from far off Minnesota; while the local slope sends both young and teaching Elders in unusual numbers.

Thursday morning sees the reception rooms of the Committee swarming with commissioners, and eleven o'clock finds the ample and elegant audience room of the church well filled with members of the body and citizens with Dr. Nelson in the pulpit, and Timothy Hill of Kansas, and Dr. Skinner, of New York—the East, the West and the centre—the thinkers and the workers in the church. The fine oratorical voice and burly frame of Mr. Hill contrasts strongly with the delicate utterances, but high, firm form of Dr. Skinner. The preliminary services are promptly and heartily done, and the sermon—but thirty five minutes long—leaves the congregation in the very uncommon condition of hunger for more. The grand distinguishing feature of our body as the advocate of Scriptural liberty within the bounds of a genuine Calvinism was ably presented and defended. What might have been said in the way of warning, against allowing that liberty to degenerate into license, was barely hinted at. But the frank presentation of the former idea was not only due to the speaker, but showed every disposition to put our brethren of the other branch in full possession of the facts in regard to the doctrinal position and spirit of our body.

The election of moderator was very quietly done. Dr. Patterson, of Chicago, nominated Dr. Stearns; Dr. Prentiss was nominated by another, and Dr. Tuttle, of Wabash College, by another. Dr. Prentiss promptly requested the Assembly to excuse him, which was done, and in a few minutes the roll was called, and the count showed 127 votes for Dr. Stearns, and 70 for President Tuttle. Dr. Stearns is well known as one of the most urbane of Christian gentlemen as well as most thoroughly at home in the working and history of the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Stillman, of Buffalo, also well acquainted with the details of Presbyterian business, and Rev. T. Ralston Smith, D.D., of New York were elected temporary clerks, without a division, and took their places.

From this point the business of the Assembly proceeded rapidly. Three Permanent Committees: Publication, Home Missions, and Education, presented reports before the Assembly adjourned. Mr. Dulles as usual had a full abstract of his report in pamphlet form, showing his habitual and praiseworthy regard for the reading as well as the hearing public. The other reports, lengthy as they were, had to be abstracted hastily on the spot by the crowded reporters. Hence the great disproportion between the length of the latter and the former in the printed report.

It is not to be concealed that thus far the reports show little or no progress financially over last year. Home Missions received only \$5,700 more. Publication received more from sales but not from donations. Education was in such straits that the Committee was obliged to sell several scholarships in order to meet immediate necessities. Happily a legacy of five or six thousand dollars, received late in the year, restored the equilibrium and enabled the Committee to purchase back some of the scholarships, sold earlier. With this legacy the receipts are over \$23,000 in all, or about \$5000 in advance of last year. But these Committees all represent the work of God in the Church as in the same line of progress which has so encouraged the hearts of the brethren in recent years. The number of Home Missionaries is not far from 500. Progress is reported among the Germans. The Committee seem prepared for definite work among the Freedmen, where the door is wide open, and where they seem satisfied the joint work of Education and Evangelization can be effectively carried on under the Home Missionary plans of the General Assembly. There is very great increase in the number of candidates in charge of the Education Committee, and a prospect of a further increase in the year just begun.

Friday, May 22d.

The report on Foreign Missions is very much in the tone of preceding documents, showing no marked progress in contributions while the field is ever widening, and the blessing of God upon the labors of missionaries in the conversion of men and the development of self-support and organizing tendencies among the churches is more manifest than ever.

But a very marked exception to the prevalent financial aspect, is the report of Dr. Ellinwood, the Chairman of the Church Erection Committee. A great increase in receipts amounting to nearly three-fold those of the previous year was reported, the total being over \$50,000, instead of the less than \$19,000 reported in 1867. This field has been cultivated with the most commendable energy and with the most liberal spirit, on the part of Committee, who not only have increased the number of churches added, but have made the grants average \$200 more each than in last year, their aim being to relieve the churches of all special appeals by the extent of their appropriations to needy enterprises.

Walter S. Griffin of New York, Secretary of the Permanent Committee on Foreign Missions, read the Report of that Committee, which we have said was not up to the expectations excited by those of recent years. The figures have already appeared in our columns.

After Mr. Griffin's report was concluded, the Assembly re-elected itself for the introduction of the great topic of the session and of the day—the Report of the Joint Committee on Reunion. Presented and doubtless written by Rev. Wm. Adams, D.D., President of the Committee, it enjoyed such high advantages of form and delivery as rarely fall to the lot of a Committee's report. With clear, ringing, musical voice; with winning modulation; with perfect ease and composure, the mellifluous periods, brilliant in rhetoric, and animated with the highest Christian sentiments, fell on the ear as a rare literary and spiritual treat. It was not only felt that under this glow of the style, serious defects in the plan were extenuated, and that the almost entranced hearers would need to be reduced to a cooler mood before they could exercise a proper degree of prudence in judging of its true worth and expediency.

As the dignified, handsome, and gracefully venerable Chairman passed from his long and eloquent introductory argument, which elicited frequent subdued demonstration of applause, to the specific terms of Reunion, there was a general stir among the members as if about to hear the unfolding of a great secret, and to reach the core of the matter. Quite a lively though brief burst of applause greeted the concluding sentences of the doctrinal article. A similar, rather more intense, but brief outburst was heard at the reading of the last article. The closing argument, in explanation and defense of the terms, was also well received; even an apt quotation from Scripture being warmly applauded, and the well elaborated peroration, full of the finest rhetoric and the noblest Christian anticipations, swept over the Assembly like a strong, sweet zephyr over a great, well-tuned Aeolian lyre. After the applause subsided the Doxology was sung by the whole body.

Dr. Patterson then arose and came forward, and with characteristic modesty, after unanimous consent given, read his dissent from various points of the action of the Committee. His comparatively brief, but weighty paper, prepared at the disadvantage of not having seen the elaborate argumentative report of the Joint Committee until last evening, was heard with profound attention, and also received with applause and referred to the Special Committee. There was no attempt on Dr. Patterson's part to do more than clearly state his position and leading arguments. He reserved his fire for a later stage in the discussion.

There is very little doubt that the movement for a more cautious policy than would be indicated by the unqualified acceptance of the majority report of the Joint Committee is strong enough in the persons of its advocates and in numbers, to make the Assembly pause and perhaps adjourn final action for another year. At the conclusion of the reading of Dr. Patterson's paper the Assembly adjourned.

The American Presbyterian says that Horace Bushnell is blind and walks on crutches. Ambassador (Universalist).

THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN says that the Church Union must have been blind when it quoted our item (credited by us to the Advance) in regard to the Cincinnati City Missionary, and then asked if we meant Dr. Bushnell of Hartford—the Horace Bushnell was it? also that the Ambassador had better walk on crutches than lean on such a broken reed as the Church Union, in the matter of news items.

THE AMERICAN RAILWAY LITERARY UNION.

This new organization, composed of some of the leading railroad and news-men of the country—as Messrs. Wells & Fargo, Daniel Drew, and Edward P. Smith (the latter formerly of the American News Co.) of New York, J. V. Farwell of Chicago, Rev. Yates Hickey and others, has for its object the laudable purpose of substituting pure and wholesome reading matter for the trash now so widely peddled among travellers and exposed on news stands. They design so far as practicable to secure the right of selling newspapers, &c., on the cars, and to give the traveling public the opportunity of purchasing religious literature, newspapers, tracts and books if they wish, though by no means to exclude the regular issues of the respectable press. They also propose to establish news stands in our cities, where similar literature may be obtained. We are sincerely thankful that this enterprise is fairly commenced and is in such able and experienced hands. After all the best way to keep chaff out of the measure is to fill it with good golden grain. Laws against immoral publications are necessary, but good, effectively written, substitutes for the trash, properly distributed, will have more effect than laws. It is high time something of the kind were done, and we are impatient to see the Society's plans in actual operation. Mr. J. A. Gardiner is the Superintendent for Philadelphia. His office is at 615 Chestnut St.

CITY SUNDAY SCHOOLS.—The Anniversary of the North Broad St. Sunday School, held on Tuesday evening of last week, was a most brilliant and successful affair. The capacious edifice was thronged in every part. The floral decorations were of the richest and most lavish character. The children, under the direction of Mr. T. S. Rawlings, sang with great enthusiasm and correctness. There were admirable addresses by Dr. Newton, the pastor; Dr. Stryker, Mos. Potter, Esq., and Gen. Gregory; but the peculiar feature of the evening was the presentation of offerings. Each class, through one of its members, came forward, with a bouquet of flowers, to which the chosen name of the class, the name of the teacher, and the amount contributed through the year was attached; together with the name of the person for whom the bouquet was designed as a gift by the class. Many other gifts, books, photographs, wax flowers, even silver ware from the scholars to the teachers, to the former pastor; (Dr. Adams) to the present pastor, (Dr. Stryker,) and their families and other persons were also presented. The services were prolonged to a late hour. Seven teachers and scholars had died during the year. The contributions which are above \$400, go mainly to the Sunday School Union. A Syrian girl is supported at Beirut—Calvary School celebrated its 15th Anniversary on last Sabbath afternoon. The membership is 437. Average attendance, \$18. Contributions for the year, \$258; for the last quarter \$140. Two female scholars are supported in Bulgaria and Syria by two of the classes. Nine scholars had united with the church. Addresses were delivered by Drs. Humphrey and March.—The 53d Anniversary of the School of the First church, was celebrated at the same time. A history of the school from the commencement was read. Addresses were made by Mr. Barnes, Dr. Stryker, and Dr. Johnson.

THE METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE, in session at Chicago, has voted to admit Southern Mission Conferences to equal rights in Conference. The "mission conference" was a device invented by politic managers some years ago, in order to extend the Church among our American citizens of African descent, and organize their preachers into quasi annual conferences, but deprive them of all vote in National Conference, in a word to make them territories and not States. The institution is by this action abolished and the delegates from the South—white and colored—have taken their seats with the rest.

Conference also adopted a rule making the use of tobacco an insurmountable disqualification in candidates for the ministry, and decided to elect no new bishops. In answer to a resolution of the African M. E. Conference, in session at Washington, a special committee of fifteen was appointed to discuss the propriety and possibility of the union of the two Churches.

The subject of the establishment of a new Presbyterian church in Wilmington, Del., was to be brought before the people of the Central Church last Sabbath. A congregational meeting will probably be held to take action. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth."